

President José Eduardo dos Santos and his party, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), continue to exercise tight control over Angola's political system. The president unilaterally decided to postpone municipal elections that had been expected in 2014 until after the 2017 general elections.

Corruption is pervasive and the independent media are still subject to legal and physical harassment. Mostly urban-based anticorruption and antigovernment protests that had begun in 2011 expanded in 2013 and continued in 2014. Demonstrators faced violent dispersal and intimidation; several were arrested and beaten, and some were killed.

After a moderate slowing of Angola's gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2013, Angola's economy sped up again in 2014. A July report from the World Bank warned of possible long-term ill effects of a narrowing current-account surplus as the country's oil-export earnings decline amid a global price decrease and as imports increase.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 10 / 40 (-1) [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 3 / 12 (-1)

The 2010 constitution abolished direct presidential elections, stipulating instead that the leader of the largest party in the parliament would become the president. The 220-seat unicameral National Assembly, whose members serve four-year terms, has little power, and 90 percent of legislation originates from the executive branch. The constitution mandated that, as of 2012, the president may serve a maximum of two five-year terms, and directly appoints the vice president, cabinet, and provincial governors. President dos Santos has been in power for 35 years, making him one of the longest-serving heads of state in Africa.

After a number of delays, deeply flawed parliamentary elections were held in 2012. The MPLA's 72 percent of the vote marked a notable decline from its 82 percent showing in 2008, but the party still maintained its overwhelming dominance in the National Assembly, garnering 175 of 220 seats. The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) is the largest opposition party in the National Assembly, holding 32 seats; the Broad Convergence for the Salvation of Angola Electoral Coalition (CASA-CE) holds 8 seats, the Social Renewal Party (PRS) holds 3, and the National Front for Angolan Liberation (FNLA) holds 2. The National Assembly easily reelected dos Santos in 2012.

On October 15, 2014, at the opening of the third session of the National Assembly, President dos Santos confirmed that already-delayed municipal elections, called for in the constitution, would again be postponed until after the 2017 general elections. The president justified this unilateral decision by citing the difficulties experienced in organizing the 2012 election and those anticipated in replacing the existing local government institutions with new municipal governments. The opposition vehemently protested the decision.

On November 26, the government approved a new Voter Registration Law in preparation for the general elections of 2017 that will automatically register all citizens over age 18 who hold an identity card; the law awaited approval by the National Assembly at the end of the year.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 6 / 16

While five political parties are represented in the National Assembly, the ruling MPLA dominates Angola's party system. The opposition has criticized dos Santos for failing to formalize the Council of the Republic—a presidential advisory body—and for delaying the municipal elections. The constitution states that the Council of the Republic should be established within a month of a president's inauguration and that it should include leaders of the opposition.

Fragmentation constrains the ability of opposition parties to act against the MPLA's overwhelming power. Constraints include their inability to agree on a common strategy, mutual mistrust, and a lack of funds that allegedly makes some opposition members vulnerable to enticements from the ruling party. One example of the lack of unity is the fact that the opposition has not been able to collectively press the government to identify and try those responsible for the death of a CASA-CE activist, Wilbert Ganga, during a November 2013 antigovernment demonstration called by UNITA.

C. Functioning of Government: 1 / 12

Corruption and patronage are endemic. In 2014, an apparent money-laundering scandal involving the Angolan subsidiary of the troubled Portuguese Espirito Santo Bank, which has close ties to the government, came under scrutiny. In another case, an August 2014 report by Global Witness raised questions about a deal through which a group of major oil companies, including BP, contributed \$175 million and are set to pay another \$175 million by January 2016 for the Sonangol Research and Technology Center (SRTC), a facility that does not yet exist. Corruption in Angola has led to increased scrutiny of dos Santos, his family, and his allies, who are among the richest people in the world. According to the anticorruption organization Maka Angola, Isabel dos Santos, the president's oldest daughter, is the largest beneficiary of the diamond trade in Angola. Angola was ranked 161 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index, a decline from 2013.

Civil Liberties: 18 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 7 / 16

Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, the state owns the only daily newspaper and national radio station, as well as the main television stations. These outlets, along with private media owned by senior officials and members of the dos Santos family, act as mouthpieces for the MPLA. Censorship and self-censorship are common.

While internet access is increasing in Angola, the government actively monitors internet activity and, in some instances, uses the data collected to crack down on dissidents.

Angolan authorities have consistently prevented independent journalists from reporting the news, denying them access to official information and events, preventing them from broadcasting, and threatening them with detention and prosecution. Security forces have also targeted journalists, particularly those covering antigovernment protests and reporting on corruption. In August 2014, Mariano Brás, a journalist working

for the weekly *A Capital*, revealed that he had received death threats following the publication of articles on fraud involving the National Bank of Angola. A reporter for Rádio Despertar, Francisco Paulo, reported being beaten by police officers as he tried to cover the suppression of a planned protest in November. At the end of the year, journalist and human rights advocate Rafael Marques de Morais was put on trial for criminal libel as a result of his accusations of human rights abuses against a diamond mining company, a private security company, and seven high-ranking generals.

Religious freedom is respected, though a high membership threshold to acquire legal status has kept many groups from registering. According to an April report by Maka Angola, the 86 churches and sects that the Angolan government has officially recognized are all Christian, despite the presence in the country of tens of thousands of Muslims. The government has maintained that it has no bias against the practice of Islam. Although 15 percent of Angolans are evangelical Christians, the Universal Church is the only evangelical church recognized by the Angolan state. In July in Cabinda, the Rapid Intervention Police clashed with followers of the Catholic Church of the Americas who were protesting against the closure of their church by the government for not meeting the requirement that churches have 100,000 followers. In November 2014, in the province of Huila, violent confrontations between church members and the armed forces and national police took place at the headquarters of the Josafat Church, which is not officially recognized by the government.

There are no formal restrictions on academic freedom, though professors avoid certain topics for fear of repercussions.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 4 / 12

The constitution guarantees freedoms of assembly and association, though in recent years, police and security forces have violently dispersed peaceful demonstrations and intimidated and arrested protesters. In May 2014, a demonstration called by the Young Revolutionaries movement in Luanda to commemorate a 1977 attempted coup was not permitted to proceed, and police arrested several movement leaders. On November 22, police prevented another demonstration in Luanda, arresting 15 young protesters and injuring 10 people, according to protest organizers. On November 23, activists were able to conduct a separate march in Luanda to mark the first anniversary of the death of Manuel Ganga.

Several hundred nongovernmental organizations operate in Angola, many of which advocate for transparency, human rights protections, and political reform. The most active organizations are often subject to government inspections, are bogged down with excessive bureaucracy, and are sometimes threatened with closure.

The constitution includes the right to strike and form unions, but the MPLA dominates the labor movement, and only a few weak independent unions exist. Still, strikes do occur: in June, almost 6,000 teachers in Huila, where an ongoing labor dispute had simmered for at least two years, began a strike that lasted for several weeks.

F. Rule of Law: 4 / 16

The courts in general are hampered by a lack of training and infrastructure, a large backlog of cases, corruption, and extensive political influence, particularly from the executive. The president appoints Supreme Court judges to life terms without legislative input. In one of many allegations of judicial abuse, in

2014 former employees of Chevron accused the oil company of benefiting from its clout over Angola's judicial system.

There is no efficient protection against unjustified imprisonment, pretrial detention, extortion, or torture. In the Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul provinces, where there is a strong military presence, civilians are allegedly killed on a daily basis.

According to Amnesty International, Angolan jails are overcrowded, do not provide basic sustenance, and are plagued by sexual abuse. They also contain a number of political prisoners, advocates of the Cabindan autonomy movement, and members of peaceful activist groups.

Tensions in the oil-rich Cabinda region remain high. The secessionist Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) and its supporters—most no longer living in the region—continue to call for talks on independence. Activists have alleged that Cabinda residents are not permitted to voice their opinions and are under constant risk of persecution and discrimination.

The law criminalizes same-sex sexual activity, though there were no reported cases of this law being enforced. Most LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people hide their gender identity, and there have been cases of harassment.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 3 / 16

Angola still has many landmines left over from its years of conflict. These restrict freedom of movement, particularly in rural areas.

Securing entry and exit visas to and from Angola remains difficult and mired in corruption. Nevertheless, the inflows of migrants from neighboring countries, as well as from Brazil, China, and Portugal, have increased. Human rights activists in Cabinda have denounced the government's treatment of illegal immigrants in the region. In an attempt to address growing immigration issues, the government proposed changes to the Nationality Law allowing the president to grant citizenship after 10 years of legal residence in the country, or to those who have provided exceptional service to the country, as long as they had knowledge of Portuguese. The proposed changes, which were sent to the National Assembly, encountered strong resistance from the opposition and civil society, who alleged that they gave the president powers that constitutionally belonged to the legislature.

Access to quality education is limited to Angola's elite and the expat community. The rest of Angola's population has access only to a barely functioning educational system thanks to underpaid and often absent and corrupt teachers as well as severely damaged infrastructure.

In 2014, the government continued a campaign of forced evictions on a mass scale in Luanda and other cities; according to Human Rights Watch, some 17,500 people were forcibly evicted in Luanda in 2014. The campaign targeted those living in informal settlements—which comprises much of the country's urban population—as well as street traders; few families received compensation or alternative housing. Bribery often underpins business activity. Despite high oil revenues, Angola has one of the lowest life expectancy rates in the world (52 years) and nearly half the population lives on less than \$1.25 a day.

Women enjoy legal protections and occupy cabinet positions and multiple seats in the National Assembly. However, de facto discrimination and violence against women is on the rise, despite a 2011 law on domestic violence. Child labor is a major problem, and there are frequent reports of trafficking in women

and children for prostitution or forced labor.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)